



## BRUCE AND BRANDON LEE *in the media*

**On April 1st at 12 o'clock midnight, I received a phone call from Cass Magda informing me that Brandon Lee had been killed in a gun accident during filming. This was immediately backed up by Mark Storey, a long-time Bruce Lee appreciator in London, and final confirmation for me came in from the radio, and Chris Kent in Los Angeles who had been in touch with the Lee family.**

The report on Brandon's death, on March 31st 1993, was that it was a 'special effect' that had gone wrong, but by April 3rd it was revealed that a .44 calibre bullet had been fired from a prop gun and had entered Brandon's body just above his navel and lodged near his spine, damaging vital blood vessels. He was rushed to hospital and after twelve hours of intense surgery and fourteen pints of blood, Brandon Lee died, at the age of twenty-seven.

The film Brandon was working on was called *The Crow* which was about a rock musician who returns from the grave, and was being filmed in Wilmington, North Carolina. The actor who fired the fatal shot has not been revealed as he is said to be in a state of shock and very distressed. Brandon was going to marry Eliza Hutton, aged twenty-six, on April 27th. Our sympathies go out to Brandon's mother, Linda, Bruce (his stepfather) and sister Shannon, and to Eliza. Brandon's final resting place will be in Seattle, where his famous father, Bruce Lee, is buried. Next month M.A.I. will be featuring a special tribute to Brandon Lee.

Finally, this month's column covers a very old interview with Linda Lee about Bruce and Brandon, this will be our last writings from Linda until she wishes to speak publicly again. As a final tribute to Brandon and also to my best friends, Chris Kent, Cass Magda, Greg Rhodes and Will Johnston, I sign off with the words that were immortalised by Brandon Lee...

Keep the faith.

**A. J. Staton.**

# Interview with LINDA LEE *Seattle 1974*

**Interviewer:** How did you meet Bruce?

**Linda Lee:** I met him just before school started in 1963. I had a Chinese girlfriend that used to take gung fu from him in high school, and we used to kid her about it. We thought it was pretty funny. But in '63, I began studying it with Bruce every week for about a year, but then we got married. You know, he was doing it ALL the time, and he used to practise with me sometimes, but then the kids came along and I did not practise as much as I used to.

**Interviewer:** Is Jeet Kune Do different from karate?

**Linda Lee:** Yes. I would say that it's just Bruce Lee's own way of fighting and philosophy. He didn't like to call it a style, he didn't want a name put on it. But in order to talk about it, you would have to have a name, so the translation of Jeet Kune Do is The Way of the Intercepting Fist. It was just his own development over so many years of studying martial arts, and reading everything he could about it, all types of martial arts: oriental fencing, wrestling, both ancient and modern, all types, seeing what was effective and what works, and what adaptations could be made and always inventing new things. You can't say that this and this composes Jeet Kune Do because there wasn't any limit to it. It was just whatever worked, it's sort of your own expression of yourself. Of course, you learn some basic techniques, then you learn how to use them best in whatever situation may arise. So in Jeet Kune Do you don't practise in set situations like they do in karate; like if a guy does this, then you do this, because what if a guy does NOT do that. So it's just learning how to express yourself through your body.

**Interviewer:** Could you condense what Bruce Lee's philosophy on life was?

**Linda Lee:** Well, that's hard to do but, he did not believe in having set rules or like I said, in martial arts, he didn't believe in having a set style, or any set patterns and... that's how his life was, it was all intermingled and interchanged. His martial arts was his life, and his life was his martial arts. He wasn't partialised, he didn't have only one aspect to his life. You could see that the philosophy of his martial arts came out in all different ways. He was extremely flexible, he believe in being fluid, not stuck, and I think that helped him go through his good and bad times. He was a very determined and aggressive kind of person. I don't mean just physically, it's just that it was his personality. He had a goal of what he wanted to do, and even though it was hard at times, he just STUCK to it! He knew that he could have done a lot of other things, you know, like if his goal was to settle and live luxuriously, he could have done it a lot of other ways. Like, after *Green Hornet*, he could have opened "Kato" schools all over the country. In fact, lots of people approached him and asked him to do that, he wouldn't do it because he didn't want to prostitute the martial arts at any time. It was more important to him to produce quality work, than to make a lot of money at it, it was nice, he enjoyed it, but that wasn't the most important thing.

**Interviewer:** Are any of the studios or schools in operation?

**Linda Lee:** Well, down in, Los Angeles, Dan Inosanto, who was his assistant down there, still has his school, but he runs it in his own home in a gym behind his house and it's mostly composed of former students who still like

to get together and practise. They take in a few new students that they screen, but they don't take just anybody. The class is kept small so that there can still be instruction on a personal level, and they try to keep to the things that Bruce wanted them to do.

**Interviewer:** Would you say that the person he was and the character he portrayed on the screen coincided?

**Linda Lee:** Yes, low key. He could walk in a room, he might not say more than ten words and there might be ten other people there, but there was something about Bruce that would draw you to him. And then the next minute he might be entertaining the whole group. There was something about his personality that was very magnetic.

**Interviewer:** I heard that he was offered the part of *Kung Fu* before the series even started is this true?

**Linda Lee:** Well, they were talking about it. He's very glad that he didn't do it. He did go down to the people at Warner Brothers, in fact he added a few ideas to their script, but by the time they got around to doing it, Bruce was in Hong Kong doing his films there and he couldn't come back to do that. They had then planned to develop another script for Bruce to do a t.v. series because after he did the Chinese movies over there, and after he did Longstreet, all the studios wanted him to do a t.v. series and they wanted to develop it especially for him, concerning martial arts, but he turned it down.

He was then getting the feel of making films in Hong Kong and there is a lot more freedom there because he could do what he wanted to. His goal was to make a feature film, and not a t.v. series; t.v. series are so unreliable, every thirteen weeks it's on the block again. He was determined to do a feature film, so he told all these studios, No! He decided to wait for a film. His attitude was: "If you don't want to do a film with me, well then, forget it!"



During that time he had plenty to do already. He was immersed in being creative, doing what he knew how to do, expressing it to people through films. He felt that if they didn't want to do it, well tough luck for them. But Warner Brothers finally wised up, and they came over and made a film.

**Interviewer:** I heard that he had all kinds of offers from people.

**Linda Lee:** Yes, this was

He was more concerned about what the movie was going to be and what character he would play in it. **Interviewer:** Is it all right to ask, how much did he get from *Fists of Fury* to *Enter the Dragon*?

**Linda Lee:** I'd rather not be specific, but it went UPI

**Interviewer:** How many movies did Bruce make?

**Linda Lee:** He made four-and-a-half movies. *Fists of Fury*, *Chinese Connection*,



after he really hit it big in Hong Kong. People came from all over the country to offer him money. They would say here's so much, do a film. And these people always think that way in Hong Kong, you know they are "very money minded". They feel that all they have to do is offer the guy the money and he'll do it. He would really shock them by saying, "Well, where's the script?" And he would say, "Who else will be in it? What's the story about?", or things of that sort. But they never thought of any of these things because they figured, all they have to do is offer him enough money and he'll accept. But Bruce would never, never, never do that.

*Way of the Dragon*, *Enter the Dragon* and *The Game of Death*. *Way of the Dragon* has not been released yet. It will be released about April of this year. That movie was made partly in Rome, I don't know what they'll call it here in the U.S., whether they'll change the title or not. Bruce wrote, directed and produced that movie himself. It's really a good movie, it's really good. It really shows a different side of Bruce. Because in this movie, his humour comes out. My mom loved that movie because he looks really cute in it. Let's see, that's the movie that's coming out. Then there's the *Game of Death*. Bruce finished half of it, and they're working on

finishing it now, this is Warner Brothers. Because Bruce did half of it, the conclusion is already there and he also did all the fighting in it so all they'll have to do is finish the story. They will probably hire some actors to fill in part the story, and I think that they can do it, to come out with a decent movie. The last part of the movie, the fight scene is really fantastic, wow!

**Interviewer:** Were you at all of his shootings?

**Linda Lee:** No. I'd go to the studio maybe once a week or so. I'd like to watch him but Bruce was really busy. I took the kids up there once in a while and it's hard for Bruce to concentrate with the kids around. It was dangerous too, because they'd go running around and there's these great big lamps with cords all over the place, so we didn't do that very often but it was interesting for them to watch daddy.

**Interviewer:** Has Bruce, being a superstar, affected the lives of the children?

**Linda Lee:** The only difference it made in Hong Kong to the children was they had to be more restricted. Everyone knew who they were and they couldn't be let onto the streets, or couldn't walk to their friend's house. They had to be taken. Hong Kong is a rather treacherous and dangerous city. It also made some problems for my son when he went to school because he went to a Chinese school with all Chinese kids, and they all knew who he was. The first year he went there the kids would say, "Come on, you're Bruce Lee's kid, let's see what you can do".

Brandon was a bit of a bully the first year, and he could take care of himself just fine, and he would let them know about it. But the second year, he seemed to develop a different kind of attitude. That is, he wouldn't go out of his way to get into trouble, and if the kids would say, "Come on, put 'um up", he would walk away from them rather than thinking he had to show them what he could do. And I think it was from

Bruce's influence, because Bruce would get a lot of challenges but he knew that he didn't have to prove anything to anybody. So maybe that's rubbed off on Brandon.

I remember one time when Brandon came home from school and said that he met someone in the hallway and this person stepped on his toe on purpose. So I said, "What did you do?" He replied, "Punched him in the stomach". And I went, "Ohhhh". Bruce told Brandon, "Congratulations, kid!" He was very close to his kids.

**Interviewer:** When did Bruce start in kung fu?

**Linda Lee:** Bruce started when he was thirteen and studied under a famous Hong Kong teacher named Yip Man. He really got into a lot of fights when he was young. There are so many 'punks' on the streets of Hong Kong because everything is so concentrated in one small place. The rate of crime is high over there. Bruce would not back down from a fight. Of course, when he came to the U.S., it seems that he made a 360 degree turn.

**Interviewer:** Was he a citizen of both countries?

**Linda Lee:** No, he was a citizen of the United States. However, when he became eighteen, he had to decide whether he was going to give up his citizenship and stay in Hong Kong or come back to the United States. But since most eighteen-year-olds go abroad to study, he came back to the U.S. to study. He went to Edison's Technical school first to finish his high school, and then he went to the University of Washington.

**Interviewer:** How long did Steve McQueen and James Coburn study jeet kune do?

**Linda Lee:** Bruce studied with Steve off and on, because Bruce was always gone and Steve was always gone. But he studied with James more regularly, about three times a week since 1968 up until 1971. He and James got along very well, besides learning the technique and all that, they used to talk about



philosophy.

**Interviewer:** Did he have any special apparatus which he used for training?

**Linda Lee:** Oh yes, he used to invent his own exercises that he felt would benefit him. Maybe there would be a certain movement that he wanted to perfect, so he'd think of what kind of equipment he would need in order to do that, then he'd design it, and then he'd get it made.

**Interviewer:** Did he read a lot?

**Linda Lee:** Oh yes. I have, right now, about seventy boxes of books. They cover all kinds of oriental martial arts. Bruce used to go to old bookstores and look for these old rare books that aren't in publication anymore, and he used to buy them. He also collected all kinds of combat films on boxing, karate, aikido and so forth. He would look at them and say, "Well, this guy did that, and it didn't work, why?". And he would think of a way that would make it better. Or he would say, "This guy scored a point on that guy and why did he do it? What did the other guy not do that he could have done?" He was always working to perfect something. He had a lot of books on film work too, you know, technical, like directing and producing. It seems like he never could stop. When he's watching t.v. at home, a show at night, he wouldn't get all involved with the plot because he'd be watching the actor, watching the camera or else he would be reading a book with the t.v. on. You know he had this tremendous power of concentration.

**Interviewer:** What kind of foods did he like?

**Linda Lee:** Oh he loved kim chee. We used to go to Korean restaurants in Hong Kong and he'd sit there and eat, and he'd sweat and sweat, and eat and eat. He loved it.

**Interviewer:** I heard that someone guest starred on the Merv Griffin Show, and they introduced him as the one that was going to take Bruce Lee's place.

**Linda Lee:** Who said that?

No one, no one can take his place. You know there are so many people writing to producers in Hong Kong and they're saying that they have found just the person to take Bruce Lee's place, and that he's Bruce Lee's look-alike! But no one can take his place... no one!

**Interviewer:** In his movies he does a lot of high kicks, does he favour those kind of kicks?

**Linda Lee:** Oh, he did some in the films. Some things in the films are not what he would have done in a real situation. In the films he had to dramatise it, make it look showy. He didn't think that a flying kick or a kick to the head is the most effective thing. He always stuck to the simplest, most effective, like he'd usually try to keep his kicks below the belt. Bruce knew that in order to know what was the simplest and most effective a person must learn everything else too, learn the complicated things and things that were no use at all. So he knew it all, because he went into the depth of things.

**Interviewer:** Bruce really had good expressions on the screen...

**Linda Lee:** Yes, you see, if they wanted to use another actor that was in Hong Kong, they could have, and the movie would have done all right. But the reason why those movies did so well, broke all box-office records and everything, was because Bruce had that... 'special something'. He had the ability and the skill that was better than other actors in Hong Kong.

**Interviewer:** What would you say Bruce did for martial arts in America?

**Linda Lee:** He popularised the art to all the people. Why even to those people who are not interested in martial arts. Even before he was on films, the in-circle of karate and all martial arts, they really respected him. Even though they knew that he didn't believe in karate, he didn't believe in tournaments, and he wasn't shy about saying so, they still respected him because they could see what he had to offer.



**Interviewer:** He had tremendous power and speed, especially his hands.

**Linda Lee:** He did. You know that scene in *Enter the Dragon* when he fights Bob Wall, when Bob had those bottles? Well, in the first take Bob forgot to drop the bottles and Bruce came in, and they were real bottles, they don't have fakes up there. Well, Bruce cut his hand pretty bad. He also got bitten by a cobra, but it did not bother him one bit.

**Interviewer:** Did you have a chance to meet his parents?

**Linda Lee:** I never met his father. He died one week after Brandon was born in 1965. Bruce used to follow his father to these operas and Bruce was on films in Hong Kong when he was a little boy, that must have created an interest for him in acting.

**Interviewer:** Bruce is known for the spectacular feats that he could do. Could you tell us of any outstanding ones?

**Linda Lee:** One year, Bruce went to Tennessee with a producer, Sterling Siliphant. Sterling asked him to choreograph the fight scenes. They were doing a movie in the hills of Tennessee and there were no parts for Orientals due to the fact that there were none around. So Bruce went down and they had these stuntmen to do the fighting, and of course the stuntmen did have a strong union, you know, they all stuck together, and most of them were really huge. When Bruce got there they didn't respect him at all, you know this little Chinese guy, and they didn't think that he had the right to tell them what to do because

they were in the union and he was an outsider, but Sterling was running the show and he told them that they had to do what Bruce told them to do, but they still were bugging him because they didn't like the idea. Finally, Sterling said "Well, you guys think that you're so tough so why don't we try something here". Bruce had this football air-shield with him, so he told one of the men to hold it and that he was going to kick it from a standing position. Bruce told the stuntman, "Brace yourself good because you are going to fly back a few feet". This guy was about 250 pounds and he told Bruce, "Oh, sure I am". Sterling said, "Wait a minute, let's make it more interesting", so he told the stuntman to stand in front of the pool and really brace himself. Then Bruce, really unassuming, and with no preparation, kicked, and so the guy flies right into the swimming pool. Another guy seeing what had happened, told Sterling, "Oh, he wasn't ready. And so the other guy tried it, and the same thing happened. After that, they did everything he told them to do.

Bruce also carried a mitt that looked like the baseball mitt, only it was flat. When he met someone that was interested in martial arts, he would take out this mitt, put it on and say, "Here, take a swing, all you've got", and they would wind-up and hit it. Then Bruce would tell them to wear it, and he would show them that you didn't have to wind up for a punch, all you needed was a short distance. He would show them that by relaxing and tensing at the right moment, how so much more power could be put into it. And they were always amazed because Bruce was not a big guy, yet he could focus it all in one spot. It happened in the Black Belt office too, I forgot whose arm he dislocated that time, but it came to a point that everyone knew about it so they were more careful.

**Interviewer:** If Bruce had a problem, I don't know, I



would imagine everyone has problems in their life, did he ever come home and say, "Honey, or dear....."?

Becky (Linda's girlfriend): Yes, and it wasn't only at home either. If Linda happened to be over at my house, even for five minutes, and he was home, he'd call up and say to Linda, "Come home". He wanted her all the time, all the time!

Interviewer: Did Bruce spoil his son?

Becky: Oh, I used to take Brandon out all the time, because he couldn't go out much. We used to take him diving and I would get a lecture for about ten minutes before we could even leave the house. Bruce would say, "Don't let him swim out too far," and "don't let him do this, and don't let him do that. But, of course, you know Brandon has a mind of his own too!

Linda Lee: You know, Bruce didn't feel that a child should be restricted too much, he did not feel that a child should be inhibited, too many rules, but then a child should know the limit. Brandon is the kind of guy that pushes, you know, he's always testing, really clever. He would push and push and get so far and Bruce would slam his hand on the table and that

was it! I would talk to Brandon for about an hour and he wouldn't listen, but all Bruce had to do was look at him and that was that! He would never have to spank him, all he had to do was look at him.

Interviewer: How does Brandon look now?

Linda Lee: Bruce used to say the only 'blond-haired, gray eyed Chinaman'. He's the exact image of Bruce. Not only in looks, but he's always on the go. He can handle his body really well for an eight-year-old, you know, he's not awkward. Bruce always pictured himself as really being able to relate with a son because they'd wrestle and all that, but when our daughter was born, he was not too sure whether he'd enjoy a girl as much. But he really did. Shannon was sort of the apple of his eye. Anything she wanted he couldn't turn her down. It was a completely different kind of relationship than with Brandon, but she's really a sweetheart. Brandon's hair is getting darker now, in fact, it's darker than mine!

Interviewer: Is Brandon going to continue in martial arts?

Linda Lee: Yes, I think I'm going to ask Taky to teach

him. Brandon is studying judo, he was studying it in Hong Kong because Bruce felt that for his first formal instruction he should take judo because at age eight Brandon was not ready to receive his instruction in jeet kune do. In jeet kune do, it would take some discipline of the mind and co-ordination of the body, and at eight it is pretty hard to do. Bruce taught him a few things like how to side kick, and he knows how to punch effectively. He used to have Brandon, 'punch his mitt' all the time. But as far as training, he had him start in judo because it's a sport, and it's body contact and it teaches the kids how to handle their bodies. As he gets older, if he's still interested in martial arts, he'll learn much more.

Interviewer: How did Bruce's death come about?

Linda Lee: I know there's a lot of rumours, but I suppose it would be best just to clear it up and say the facts. Bruce died of cerebral edema, it's a swelling of the brain fluid, it causes pressure on the brain. There was no haemorrhage or breaking of a blood vessel at all. This cerebral edema had to be caused by something. They

did an extensive autopsy and they had an inquest and went into every itty bitty details, and they are not really sure about the cause because they could find nothing strange in his body at all, except that this cerebral edema is often a sign that the body has reacted sensitively to something foreign. So the only foreign substance that was found was a prescribed headache tablet that was given to him shortly before he died, because he complained of a headache. It's medicine that's not unusual, and it has never caused this type of reaction in anybody else. They analysed the ingredients in it and there was one ingredient in it that I think that there is one case in all of history that there was somebody who was sensitive to it. Anyway, it's on the same order of a penicillin reaction, some people just can't take it. So they theorised that Bruce was hyper-sensitive to this chemical in this drug, it is extremely rare, it almost never happens. They can't find any other cause for it. Bruce was sick in May of 1973, he was very sick and he collapsed and had cerebral edema but they were able to give him medication in time for him to recover. They thought he had been working too hard and that's what might have caused it. When he came to the States, they had extensive tests on him. They could find absolutely nothing wrong with him. Anyway, they have their theories, and they have their educated guesses, but I don't think it's kind of mysterious. But anyway, the cause of death, as stated on the death certificate, is cerebral edema, caused by hyper-sensitivity.

*Linda, who was in pre-med for a whole year at the University, is now taking Chinese. She is studying the history, the language, the philosophy and the geography. She really became interested in it after living with Bruce and also because the children are half-Chinese.*



Left to right: Raymond Chow (from Golden Harvest days), Linda, Mr & Mrs Fred Weintraub (Bruce's producer) and Bruce.